

He Could Have Given Up

He could have given up. No one would have known otherwise. Jesus could have given up.

One look at the womb could have discouraged him. God is as unbridled as the air and limitless as the sky. Would he reduce his world to the belly of a girl for nine months?

He could have given up. If not, at least he could have stopped short. Did he have to become *flesh*? How about becoming light? Her is an idea. Heaven could open, and Christ could fall on the earth in the form of a white light. And then in the light there could be a voice, a booming, thundering, teeth-shaking voice. Toss in a gust of wind and the angels for background vocals, and the whole world notices!

And the stable. Is that not yet another reason for Christ to back out? Stables are smelly, dirty. How are they going to cut the umbilical cord? And who is going to cut the umbilical cord? Joseph? A small-time carpenter from a one-camel town? Is there not a better father for God? Someone with an education, a pedigree. Someone with a bit of clout? This fellow couldn't even swing a room at the hotel. You think he's got what it takes to be the father to the Maker of the universe?

Jesus could have given up. Imagine the change he had to make, the distance he had to travel. What would it be like to become flesh?

This question surfaced as I was golfing recently. Waiting my turn to putt, I squatted down to clean my ball and noticed a mountain of ants beside it. Must have been dozens of them, all over each other. A pyramid of motion at least half an inch tall.

I don't know what you think when you see ants on a green as you are waiting to putt. But here is what I thought. *Why are you guys all bunched up? You have the whole green. Why, the entire golf course is yours to spread out in.* Then it occurred to me. These ants are nervous. Who could blame them? They live under a constant meteor shower. Every few minutes a dimpled orb comes crashing into their world. *Bam! Bam! Bam!* Just when the bombing stops, the mallet-swinging giants arrive. If you survive their feet and sticks, they roll a meteor at you. A golf green is no place for an ant.

So I tried to help them. Leaning down where they could hear me, I invited, "Come on, follow me. We'll find a nice spot in the rough. I know it well." Not one looked in my direction. "Hey, ants!" Still no reply. Then I realized, *I don't speak their language.* I don't speak Ant. Pretty fluent in the idiom of Uncle, but I don't speak Ant.

So what could I do to reach them? Only one thing. I needed to become an ant. Go from six feet inches to teeny-weeny. From 200+ pounds to tenths of an ounce. Swap my big world for their tiny one. Give up burgers and start eating grass. "No thanks," I said. Besides, it was my turn to putt.

Love goes the distance . . . and Christ traveled from limitless eternity to be confined by time in order to become one of us. He didn't have to. He could have given up. At any step along the way he could have called it quits.

When he saw the size of the womb, he could have stopped.

When he saw how tiny his hand would be, how soft his voice would be, how hungry his tummy would be, he could have stopped. At the first whiff of the stinky stable, at the first gust of cold air. The first time he scraped his knee or blew his nose or tasted burnt bagels, he could have turned and walked out.

When he saw the dirt floor of his Nazareth house. When Joseph gave him a chore to do. When his fellow students were dozing off during the reading of the Torah, his Torah. When the neighbor took his name in vain. When the lazy farmer blamed his poor crop on God. At any point Jesus could have said, "That's it! That's enough! I'm going home." But he didn't.

He didn't, because he is love. And "love . . . endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7 NKJV).